



TRAINING OF VERNACULAR TEACHERS IN PRE-INDEPENDENT INDIA IN THE FIRST HALF OF TWENTIETH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The development of teacher education had been a continuous process since the beginning of the nineteenth century in British India. The teachers' training programme of pre-independence period in general could be classified into three categories: training of primary and middle school teachers, training of Anglo-Vernacular teachers for Secondary English schools and training of vernacular teachers. Existence of separate types of training institutions had been found for these three types of training. The development of vernacular teachers' training in the various provinces of British India during the first half of twentieth century (1900-1947) is discussed in the present paper from a historical point of view.

KEY WORDS: Vernacular Teachers' Training, Pre-Independent India.

INTRODUCTION:

The teacher education system as exists today in India has a long historical background. The idea of teacher training had actually been originated from the 'monitorial system' prevalent during ancient period in India. The formal teacher education programme in India started its journey with the hands of the Christian missionaries at the end of the eighteenth century. The Danish Missionaries established the first teacher training institution (Normal School) at Serampore in 1793 for the training of primary school teachers. It was the introduction of western education which paved the way for the beginning of teacher education. The development of teacher education had been a continuous process since the beginning of the nineteenth century in British India. The teachers' training programme could be classified into three categories: training of primary and middle school teachers, training of Anglo-Vernacular teachers for Secondary English schools and training of vernacular teachers. Existence of separate types of training institutions had been found for these three types of training. The development of vernacular teachers' training in the various provinces of British India during the first half of twentieth century (1900-1947) is discussed in the present paper from a historical point of view.

Features of Vernacular Teachers' Training:

During the period under discussion, some major changes had been taken place in this system of training. Firstly, there was an increase in the number of training institutions. Secondly, the duration of the course had been made two years. Thirdly, the staff pattern in the training institutions was strengthened and improved. Fourthly, special attention was paid in training to connect the acquired knowledge with realities and to rouse intelligent and interest. Fifthly, some of the existing institutions were rebuilt and enlarged. Some new institutions had been set up and some were replaced. All the institutions were well built and well equipped. A satisfactory kind of training was provided for best of the vernacular teachers in these training institutions and these were costly institutions.

Vernacular Training Institution:

Vernacular training institutions were classified into two categories: Normal schools and Training classes or schools. Normal schools prepared middle vernacular passed students as teachers of vernaculars in the secondary schools or head masters of primary schools. The training imparted was of superior in nature and duration of training varied from one to three years. "Training classes or schools of a lower type are intended to turn out a less finished article and instruct possessors of middle vernacular or lower qualifications, generally through a shorter course, as ordinary teachers in primary schools." (Seventh Review page 163). There were arrangements for re-training vernacular teachers in some provinces.

Normal Schools:

The organization of Normal schools in various provinces of British India, except Madras and Burma was almost similar. These provinces were Bombay, Bengal, the United Provinces, the Punjab, Bihar and Orissa, the Central Provinces and Assam. In Bombay the normal schools were known as training colleges, and in western Bengal and Bihar and Orissa it was called first grade training schools. The duration of the course was generally one or two years, but it was three years in western Bengal. The arrangement in Punjab deserved special mention. A candidate, who was under training for a year in a normal school and placed in first division in the examination, could proceed to the Central Training College at Lahore for further training in the senior vernacular class during another year. Such candidates got employment as teachers of Urdu, Persians and Science in the middle departments of Anglo-vernacular schools. As per Government Report for

the year 1925-26 "the scheme of training in the Vernacular Training Schools in the Punjab has undergone considerable revision" (Education in India, 1925-26, page 24). The Director of Public Instruction (DPI) reported that "the most potent and healthy innovation has been the revision of the scheme of training whereby the activities of the students are no longer limited to class room routine and to the prescribed examination syllabus. Systematic efforts are now made to give a wider and more suitable training than can be imparted by means of a mere scheme of studies. Students are trained in all those movements which should lead to the uplift of village life and conditions." (page 24). One of the outstanding features of the work of the Training Schools in Punjab was the arrangement of "Re-fresher Course" for teachers annually. There were two divisional normal schools in Assam. Besides, five small schools were there in Assam for the training of teachers in the Garo, Khasi, Jaintia, Lushai and Naga hills. The normal school for vernacular teachers in the North-West Frontier Province was attached to the training college. During the quinquennium a normal school at Ajmer-Merwara was opened for the teacher of that province and some of the surrounding Native States.

Training Classes:

The training classes in Bombay, the United Provinces and the Punjab were separated from the normal schools and attached to middle vernacular school. The lower form of vernacular training institutions did not exist in the Central Provinces or the North-Western Frontier Provinces. In the United Provinces normal classes proved to be successful and the number of such classes had been increased from 109 to 267. In Punjab the training classes were considered as an "insufficient output of normal school." (Seventh Review page 164)

Vernacular Teachers' Training in Various Provinces of British India: There was a general resemblance between the systems of training vernacular teachers followed in seven provinces of British India namely, Bombay, Bengal, the United Provinces, the Punjab, Eastern Bengal and Assam, the Central Provinces and Berar, and the North-Western Frontier Province. The systems existed in Madras and Burma was different. The main feature in these provinces in the training of vernacular teachers was the provision of institutions. In Bombay it was called Training Colleges, Normal Schools in the United Provinces, the Punjab, the Central Provinces and the North-West Frontier Province. In Bengal and Eastern Bengal and Assam it was known as Training Schools. After completing the most advanced course offered in the vernacular school, the vernacular students were admitted in these institutions. The highest level of vernacular instruction was the vernacular middle standard in most of the provinces. The pupils were taught in vernacular in these institutions and the length of the course was of two years. The content of the training course comprised some extension and revision of their general studies and professional training in the theory and practice of teaching. Almost all the institutions of this kind were established and maintained by the Government. These were directly managed by the Education department. Privately managed institutions had connection with the missionaries. After completion of the training, the candidates got employment in primary schools, middle vernacular schools and the vernacular classes of secondary schools. The number of training schools and pupils in 1907 were as follows:

Name of the Province	Number of institutions	Number of pupils
Bombay	7	1,078
Bengal	8	474
United Provinces	6	708

Punjab	5	401
Eastern Bengal and Assam	5	393
Central Provinces and Berar	5	370
North-West Frontier Province	1	25

Source: *Progress of Education in India 1902-07, Fifth Quinquennial Review*, page 222

Bombay:

Among 7 institutions in Bombay Presidency, 5 institutions located at Poona, Dhulia, Ahmedabad, Dharwar and Hyderabad were Government institutions. At Nagar, there was a missionary institution and the institution at Rajkot was under Native State management. From the reports of the Directors of Public Instruction, the nature of the training institutions and their progress during the period 1902-1907 can be obtained. For Bombay, Mr. Selby wrote, "The extension and improvement of vernacular training colleges and schools is perhaps the most important feature in the history of the last five years. It is upon the adequate organization of these that the success of primary education depends." (page 223). These training institutions had been imparting a satisfactory kind of training for the best of the vernacular teachers. Bombay had five vernacular teachers' colleges, one training school which was managed by the Government and one school was under the management of American Mission. (1907-12)

Bengal:

In Bengal, for the training of secondary vernacular teachers, there were eight Government schools at Calcutta, Hooghli, Ranchi, Patna, Dacca, Rangpur, Chittagong, Cuttack and Bankipur. Two subsidiary second grade training schools were situated at Daltonganj and Motihari. The Church Missionary Society conducted a training school at Krishnagar. During this period less improvement had been taken place which was "partly due to the delay in carrying out a plan, which had been projected and has been under discussion through out the period, for placing the system of vernacular training in the province under the superintendence of a special officer in the Indian Educational Service and establishing him at a central institution." (Progress of Education 1902-07 page 224) Mr. Hornwell, DPI Bengal wrote,

"There is evidence of a widespread feeling that the students trained at the first grade training schools have recently deteriorated considerably. This view is supported, not only by the reports of inspecting officers, but also by the letters of various persons who were consulted on the improvement of secondary education. The main causes to which this deterioration is ascribed are the reduction of the course to two years, and the abolition of the practice of holding school a public examination at the end of the middle stage of school instruction, which is alleged not only to have it difficult to decide whether a candidate for admission to a first grade training school has the requisite educational qualifications, and to the consequent admission into the training schools of inferior material, but also to have resulted in an actual lowering of the standard of acquirement attained during the school course." (Progress of Education 1902-07 page 224)

Madras:

The system of training of vernacular teachers in Madras was different from other provinces mentioned above. In the other provinces "the system of training mainly depends upon the existence of a few institutions of the first grade, well-equipped and well-staffed, into which students are received after passing the middle vernacular standard of general education, that is to say the 7th standard above the infants, and remain at the training institution for two years, during which they continue their general education and receive training in the theory and practice of teaching. Such training institutions of first grade are now in most provinces supplemented by inferior systems of training designed for students of lower qualifications, but the influence of the training institutions permeates these inferior systems also, since the teachers who administer them have been trained at the first grade training institutions. In Madras there are at present no training schools of a kind corresponding to those of the first grade in the other provinces, but there are 44 training schools for masters, at which students receive a course of training which qualifies them to have charge of primary schools." (Education in India 1902-07 page 232) Primary schools which had seven classes above the infants were known as lower secondary. As per the sixth review, Madras had eight training schools which belonged to the secondary grade.

The demarcation between English and vernacular was not clear in Madras. There were usually three departments in a training school: secondary, higher elementary and lower elementary. In order to take admission in the secondary department, a student had to at least matriculate or had to possess a school leaving certificate. They were trained in "a purely technical course in English for one year and become teachers of secondary schools." (Seventh Review Page 164-165). The criteria for admission in the other two departments were the completion of eighth and fifth standard respectively. The duration of the course was of two years for both cases and included a large number of general subjects. As an additional language English might be taught in higher elementary department. The trained teachers from this department were employed in elementary schools, in some cases they had been found in the lower classes of secondary schools. Steps were taken in Madras to extend the scope of Vocational classes attached to training schools. During the year 1925-26, 59 new schemes were sanctioned and

classes included wood work, weaving, dyeing, engraving, book binding, market gardening, tailoring and horticulture.

United Provinces:

The training schools at Allahabad, Lucknow, Agra, Moradabad, Gorakhpore and Almora of United Provinces were all managed and conducted by Government. In Punjab, training schools were situated at Lahore, Delhi, Multan, Jullundur and Rawalpindi and managed by Government.

In the Eastern Bengal and Assam also all the training schools were Government and located at Dacca, Rangpur, Chhitagong, Jorhat and Silchar.

Four Government schools in the Central Provinces and Berar were situated at Jubbulpore, Raipur, Nagpur and Akola. There was one school at Ellichpur managed by the Missionary.

There was one Government institution in the North-West Frontier Province, which was located at Peshawar. There were arrangements for re-training vernacular teachers in some provinces.

Guru Training Schools:

In Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, a large number of guru training schools (training of ordinary village school teachers) and training schools for the muallims (teachers of specially Muhammadan schools) existed. These schools were running in a very deplorable condition. "The original idea was to establish a cheap form of training under which each school should instruct 10 primary teachers of the neighbourhood and then move on to some other locality." (Seventh Review Page 164). But the result was not satisfactory. During the period (1907-1912) two schemes of reforms had been introduced in western and eastern Bengal. The decision for western Bengal was to "multiply the number of schools so that each subdivision should possess two, while the limit of numbers in each school was raised to 16. In eastern Bengal on the other hand a system of concentration was pursued by the enlargement of the existing schools in the first instance of 20 pupils each." But in 1909 a new proposal was sanctioned and the number of pupils in each school was raised to 40. However, finally it was decided that for the entire Bengal presidency the system "must follow in its main features that of the eastern districts."

Courses of Training:

The course of training comprised some extension of candidates' general knowledge, the reading of a simple work on the principles and practice of education, a considerable amount of drill in method, actual teaching in a model school under supervision and special lessons in drawing, black-board writing, map and globe making, nature study or rural science. In the Madras report mention had been made about the following:

"As regards the methods followed in the training schools, criticism and model lessons are generally suitably conducted. A weaker point in the training is the work in the practicing section. With the existing numbers it is difficult to give the students sufficient practical work; nor does it appear to be sufficiently recognized that the practical work done must be thoroughly supervised, scrutinized and discussed with the students. the teaching of the subjects of general education is variously reported upon. With their better staffs, the government schools are better than the aided schools. Nature study seems to be the weakest subject and garden work poor. It is hoped that the revised syllabuses which will shortly issue and the special lectures on rural science will improve matters. Criticisms are also heard of the teaching of geography and the vernaculars. On the whole, however, real progress appears to have been made." (Seventh Review page 166).

CONCLUSION:

The system of vernacular teachers' training in different provinces had not been uniform, but it was well developed. Existence of various types of institutions for the training of vernacular teachers had been found. The curriculum was also different from province to province, which used to impart a less complete training. But it took into account the development of various aspects of pupil teachers' personalities. Initiatives for training were taken by the government as well as by private organizations. Thus the vernacular teachers' training co-existed with the other types of teachers' training in pre-independent India.

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